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Roman Architectural *Spolia*[1]

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SPOLIA is an arcane term, even to many art historians. The literal meaning of the Latin word is "spoils," especially spoils of war. The translation of this word to art history was made around the turn of the sixteenth century in the antiquarian circle that included Raphael. Canvassing Rome for antiquities, these scholars and artists coined *spolia* as a name for the ancient marble ornaments they repeatedly encountered in secondary medieval settings. Deliberately or not, their choice of *spolia*, Italian *spoglie*, implied violent removal from a violated source, a rape of the classical past. In a letter to Pope Leo X dated 1519, Raphael pointed out the *spoglie* on the Arch of Constantine: reliefs in the noble classical style of the second century, which he contrasted with what he called the "stupid" fourth-century sculptures produced by the makers of the arch. A guidebook to "anticaglie [antiquities] et spoglie" in Rome written a few years earlier begins with St. Peter's basilica, which is said to be "fatta tutta di spoglie"; in this case the term applies not to sculpture but to "colonne bellissime con chapitegli chorinti."[2] Old St. Peter's was torn down in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and its reused "beautiful columns" can no longer be seen, but nearly two dozen early Christian and medieval churches survive elsewhere in Rome with spoliate colonnades wholly or partially intact (Fig. 1).

My charge is to say something about *spolia* that illuminates the theme "Rome: The Tide of Influence." "Influence" is another term requiring definition. To stimulate my thinking about it I pulled from the shelf two standard works with "influence" in their titles, both published in the early 1970s: *Classical Influences on European Culture A.D. 500–1500*, edited by R. R. Bolgar, and *The Anxiety of Influence*

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[1] This paper was delivered at the symposium "Rome: The Tide of Influence" on 28 April 2000. I am most grateful to Prof. Helen North, who organized the symposium, for inviting me to be part of it.

[2] Dale Kinney, "*Spolia. Damnatio* and *renovatio memoriae*," *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 42 (1997): 120–22.

by Harold Bloom. They proved to be productively dissimilar. Bolgar's introduction to a volume of conference proceedings implies rather than states a loose definition, capacious enough to embrace the collected studies of philologists, paleographers, classicists, and art historians. Here influence is defined as survival and revival; as quotations, borrowings, the "transmission of ideas," inspiration, even "an attitude toward mankind." The source of influence is "the classical heritage" of "the Greco-Roman past," and it is of interest because "the Greco-Roman past . . . shaped our culture and therefore our lives."[3] Bloom's "influence" does a very different job; it is a critical paradigm for judging poetry, for placing a selected few poems in relationship to one another. Influence is the fraught interaction between a strong successor and an overbearing predecessor; it is the anxious expression of the fear of death. Influence can be recognized in distortion, misreading, "misprision" of the source. Bloom's paradigm is Freudian and he explicitly restricts it to poetry written after the Enlightenment; before then the relation of poets to their strong precursors was one of "sonship" rather than influence. In Bloom's conception influence is precisely *not* "the transmission of ideas and images from earlier to later poets. This is . . . just 'something that happens'. . . ."[4]

Bolgar's definition of influence seems self-evidently appropriate to my topic of *spolia*, but it is flaccid, and leads to entirely predictable results. If we conceptualize *spolia* as synecdochic representations of the "classical tradition," and medieval reuse as a means of perpetuating that tradition through quotation, appropriation, or emulation, we simply write another version of a story that has been many times told. It is a true story, to be sure. The use of *spolia* in medieval architecture began at the Gibbonian moment when ancient Rome declined—the reign of Constantine; it continued throughout the Middle Ages, and it was especially pronounced during those high tides of interest in classical culture, the Carolingian period and the twelfth century; and it died when the classical tradition was resurrected as a vital form of literary and artistic practice during the Italian Renaissance. I do not need to retell this story, because everyone who has read European history already knows it.

Bloom's notoriously idiosyncratic definition has the appeal of unfamiliarity and the promise of provoking unanticipated observations. Rewriting the familiar story in its terms, one could say that the reuse of

[3] R. R. Bolgar, in *Classical Influences on European Culture A.D. 500–1500. Proceedings of an International Conference held at King's College, Cambridge April 1969* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 1–25, esp. 5, 10, 19.

[4] Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence. A Theory of Poetry* (London, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), esp. 7, 26, 58, 71.

ancient elements in medieval buildings "just happened" as the result of the unanxious imitation by medieval sons of the works of their normative fathers. There were no "strong poets [or architects]" wrestling with their strong precursors, because the post-Enlightenment paradigms of Genius and the Sublime did not exist.[5] Making had not yet been problematized as creativity, and the crafting of a new object from traditional—preused—elements could give satisfaction. Building with *spolia* was just the instantiation of tradition, and the knowledge that the language of architecture had already been spoken and could only be repeated, never invented, was contentedly embraced, to the extent that repetition was enacted as verbatim quotation. *Spolia* are not symptoms of influence, but symbols of the acceptance of the authority of the Latin/Roman past.

More interesting is the possibility that *spolia* might also be indicators of buildings that are "strong" in Bloom's sense, i.e., whose relationship to Roman precedents involved self-preserving repulsion as well as attraction. The concept is egregiously anachronistic, of course, in its Freudian matrix and its preoccupation with authorial personality.[6] But it might be applied to the Middle Ages metaphorically, so long as the goal is to uncover or redescribe affiliations between works of art or literature rather than to reconstruct how or why, historically, those affiliations came about. In literary criticism Bloom's idea has already been extended to premodern authors, including Dante and Shakespeare.[7] In the third part of this article I will suggest that there are medieval spoliate buildings whose relationship to their predecessors likewise can be understood in terms of contentious misprision rather than unexamined emulation. First, a further explanation of *spolia* and how they came to be used.

The Background

When we speak of architectural *spolia* we are speaking mostly of the elements of the classical colonnade: column shaft, base, capital, and

[5] Bloom, *Anxiety of Influence*, 27.

[6] The concept is doubly anachronistic, as it is not only post-medieval but pre-postmodern. In postmodern theory it has been superseded by intertextuality, which concerns the interplay of texts rather than of authors: "influence has to do with agency, whereas intertextuality has to do with a much more impersonal field of crossing texts"; Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein, eds., *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 4.

[7] Louis A. Renza, "Influence," in Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin, eds., *Critical Terms for Literary Study* (2d ed., Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 186–202, esp. 192–95.

entablature. Structurally they constitute posts and lintels, and they represent a building technology in which dead horizontal weights are supported by verticals of corresponding size and strength. In the fifteenth century Leon Battista Alberti observed that a colonnade is just a perforated wall.[8] In this system only the shaft and the entablature are structural necessities; bases and capitals are transitional elements introduced for aesthetic effect. The aesthetic principles governing these elements were codified by Vitruvius in a famous treatise of the latter part of the first century B.C.E. It is because of this Roman author that we classify colonnades into three orders: Doric, Ionic, or Corinthian. Vitruvius devoted a chapter to each, prescribing their proportional composition and incidentally naming all of their required parts. He proclaimed it an unacceptable transgression to transfer features of one order to another, because in his view each order had a distinctive (gendered) character, which had to be maintained to properly express a building's function.[9]

Vitruvius claimed to be describing the Greek tradition and his chapters on the orders pertain to temples in the Greek style. Roman imperial architects rarely respected the system he described. The aesthetic role of the column in their buildings was not at all what it was in the classical temple. Columns in Roman architecture were ornamental in a different way, as volitional appliqués rather than as structural elements susceptible to aestheticization. The columns described by Vitruvius were constructed of the same stone as the rest of the building, and like the building, they were composed of blocks, or drums fitted together. By adjusting the size of the drums, columns could be grown to any size proportionate to the scale of the building. The Romans preferred monoliths, which by necessity were sized by the limitations of the quarry. Monolithic column shafts were discontinuous in material not only with the rest of the structure (usually of concrete) but with their own capitals and bases. Capitals typically were of white marble while the shafts typically were not. Depending on the source of the stone, column shafts could be red, green, purple, yellow, or black. The capitals were predominantly Corinthian or the Roman hybrid composite, which combines the Corinthian acanthus basket with Ionic volutes. The Doric order was virtually

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[8] Leon Battista Alberti, *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, trans. Joseph Rykwert, Neil Leach, and Robert Tavernor (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988), 1.10 (p. 25); John Onians, *Bearers of Meaning. The Classical Orders in Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 148.

[9] Vitruvius, *De architectura* 3.5; 4.1, 3; 1.2.5-6. In her recently published translation, Ingrid Rowland eschews "order" and replaces it with "type": *Vitruvius. Ten Books on Architecture*, trans. Ingrid D. Rowland, commentary by Thomas Noble Howe (Cambridge, Eng. and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), xiii, 15.

abandoned, and Ionic capitals tended to be used in zones or structures of lesser visibility or prestige.

Unlike the marble quarried for their temples by the Greeks, the colored stones prized by the Romans were not local. They came from all around their enormous empire, but not from Italy. The most expensive stones listed in the Edict on Prices issued by Diocletian in 301, porphyry and Lacedemonian marble (green porphyry or serpentine), came from Egypt and Greece respectively. The next most expensive, Numidian and Docimian marble (*giallo antico* and *pavonazzetto*) came from Chemtou in modern Tunisia and Phrygia in modern Turkey. Moving down the list, one finds Thessalian and Lucullean marble from Greece and Turkey, Carystian marble (*cipollino*) from the Aegean island of Euboea, and two Egyptian granites, red from Syene near Aswan and grey from a site in the eastern desert called Mons Claudianus.[10] It has been pointed out that the prices of these stones must have been for thin sheets for veneer; by 301 whole column shafts were virtually unobtainable on the market, and were priceless.[11]

There was a discourse of imported stones that taught the Romans how to value them. Initially they were stigmatized as *luxuria.* Marcus Scaurus caused a scandal in 58 B.C.E. when he put colossal columns of Lucullean marble in his house.[12] Book 36 of Pliny's *Natural History,* written a century later, opens with a denunciation of the trade on ecological grounds: "Mountains . . . were made by Nature for herself to serve as a kind of framework. . . . We quarry these mountains and haul them away for a mere whim. . . . Ships are built specially for marble. And so, over the waves of the sea, Nature's wildest element, mountain ranges are transported to and fro. . . ."[13] Pliny's attitude is still imbued with nostalgia for republican austerity. Under the empire the norm was

[10] *Edictum Diocletiani et Collegarum de pretiis rerum venalium*, ed. Marta Giacchero, 1 (Genoa: Istituto di Storia Antica e Scienze Ausiliarie, 1974), 210–11; Raniero Gnoli, *Marmora romana* (2d ed., Rome: Edizioni dell'Elefante, 1988), 124–26, 141–43, 145–47, 149–50, 162–63, 166, 169–71, 174–76, 181; J. Clayton Fant, "The Roman Emperors in the Marble Business: Capitalists, Middlemen or Philanthropists?" in Norman Herz and Marc Waelkens, eds., *Classical Marble: Geochemistry, Technology, Trade* (Dordrecht, Boston, London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1988), 147–58; idem, "Ideology, gift, and trade: a distribution model for the Roman imperial marbles," in W. V. Harris, ed., *The Inscribed Economy. Production and distribution in the Roman empire in the light of* instrumentum domesticum (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 145–70.

[11] Simon Corcoran and Janet De Laine, "The unit measurement of marble in Diocletian's Prices Edict," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 7 (1994): 263–73.

[12] Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* 36.2, 24; Fant, "Ideology, gift, and trade," 146–47.

[13] Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* 36.1, trans. D. E. Eichholz (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962; Loeb Classical Library), 3–5; Jacob Isager, *Pliny on Art and Society. The Elder Pliny's Chapters on the History of Art* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 144–47.

ostentation, and colored marble was the stuff of panegyric. Horace, Statius, and Martial praised marble, or praised with marble, and the tradition was continued well beyond late antiquity.[14] Poets taught their readers to admire "the stone of eastern Syene [Aswan granite], splashed with veining"; *pavonazzetto*'s "white expanse . . . bordered by a rim of purple," which "Phrygian axes hew in mournful Synnas o'er the fields of wailing Cybele"; "green blocks quarried from the hill of Lycurgus . . . where the stone counterfeits the grass"; "Carystian stone that joys to behold the waves."[15] Imported marbles bespoke heroic origins in distant, mythical mountains, as well as the present political dominion that brought Rome to the mountains, and the mountains to Rome.

In the brilliant second volume of his survey of Roman architecture, William MacDonald identified "column displays" as one of its "cardinal themes."[16] Most familiar from the stage walls (the *scaenae frons*) of Roman theaters, column displays are patterned arrays of columns with no structural purpose; they exist only to be seen. They could be external or internal. According to MacDonald, a purpose of column displays was to signal Rome's position as "the steward of received classical culture." Without columns, "many Roman buildings would seem to have little classical content."[17]

Column displays also advertised the extraordinary technological competence and reliable infrastructure of the empire. When this system collapsed in the third century, it became impossible to provide newly worked marbles from the eastern Mediterranean to Rome. Colossal concrete projects were still possible—witness the defensive wall built under Aurelian in the 270s—but for marble ornament builders had to turn to stockpiles of inferior or salvaged materials—that is, to *spolia*.[18] The crisis of supply peaked at the beginning of the fourth century, and so it was that the first great *spolia* structures were Constantine's: his arch dated 313–15, the contemporary cathedral at the Lateran, and the somewhat later basilica built in the Vatican over the tomb of St. Peter.

The first Christian basilicas in Rome were strong buildings in Harold Bloom's sense, misprisions of distinguished precursors in the Fora. The designer of the Lateran cathedral responded to the colossal

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[14] Gnoli, *Marmora romana*, passim; Thomas Weigel, "Spolien und Buntmarmor im Urteil mittelalterlicher Autoren," in Joachim Poeschke, ed., *Antike Spolien in der Architektur des Mittelalters und der Renaissance* (Munich: Hirmer Verlag, 1996), 125–26.

[15] Statius, *Silvae* 2.2.86–93; trans. J. H. Mozley (rept. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982; Loeb Classical Library), 101–03.

[16] William L. MacDonald, *The Architecture of the Roman Empire*, vol. 2, *An Urban Appraisal* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), 183–203.

[17] MacDonald, *Architecture*, 201, 203.

[18] Kinney, "Spolia," 124–26.

Basilica Ulpia, built by Trajan, by destroying the longitudinal symmetry of its ground plan and disrespecting the traditional principles of its elevation (Figs. 2 and 3). The architect of the Basilica Ulpia achieved the lofty height of his central nave (100 Roman feet = 29.40 m) in the traditional fashion, by stacking a second order of columns over the colossal, 30-foot shafts on the ground floor (Fig. 4).[19] The designers of the Christian basilicas attained the same height by piling on a wall, thereby transforming the character of the central space.[20] The walls towering over the columns had to be very thin—just 3 feet in St. Peter's—resulting in a gossamer structure that must have seemed very bold, if not insane, to contemporaries, especially since Roman architects traditionally overbuilt (Fig. 5).[21] The walls were still a scandal 1,100 years later, when Alberti described this aspect of St. Peter's as "a crass feature: an extremely long and high wall . . . constructed over a continuous series of openings, with no curves to give it strength, and no buttresses to lend it support. . . . I have no doubt that eventually some . . . slight movement will make it collapse."[22] In fact it survived until it was torn down in the following century.

The colonnades in the Lateran cathedral and St. Peter's were composed of *spolia*. For the Lateran the builders seem to have assembled two large sets of shafts: thirty-eight or forty granite monoliths more than 30 feet tall for the main colonnades along the nave, and forty-two much smaller shafts of Thessalian marble (*verde antico*), a little more than one-third as tall, for the outer colonnades dividing the aisles.[23] Twenty-four of the *verde antico* shafts were reused by Francesco Borromini when he remodeled the nave in the seventeenth century, and they may be seen framing the niches in his new piers.[24] At St. Peter's the colonnades were much more diverse in material. The detailed records of the architects who demolished the old church in the sixteenth century indicate that there were twelve shafts of grey granite, four of red granite, sixteen of *cipollino*, and six "mixed" marbles (at least two of which were Lucullean) among the forty-four shafts of the nave, and a different mix-

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[19] James E. Packer, *The Forum of Trajan in Rome. A Study of the Monuments*, 1 (Berkeley, Calif., and Oxford: University of California Press, 1997), 437, 471.

[20] The nave of Old St. Peter's was probably about 32 m tall, not counting the pitched roof: Achim Arbeiter, *Alt-St. Peter in Geschichte und Wissenschaft. Abfolge der Bauten. Rekonstruktion. Architekturprogramm* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1988), 108–09.

[21] Arbeiter, *Alt-St. Peter*, 136, calculates the thickness of St. Peter's wall as .90 m.

[22] Alberti, *On the Art of Building*, 26.

[23] Richard Krautheimer, Spencer Corbett, and Alfred K. Frazer, *Corpus Basilicarum Christianarum Romae*, 5 (Vatican City: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1977), 75, 76, 79.

[24] Gnoli, *Marmora romana*, 163–64.

ture in the aisles.[25] The nave shafts seem to have been distributed in transverse pairs (Fig. 6). Capitals and bases were also heterogeneous; a sixteenth-century observer wrote that "the capitals were partly complete, partly unfinished. Many bases were unlike the columns. . . . The lintels were of large marble blocks which were taken from the circus, or from the ruins of another building . . . under one of the slightly curved blocks could be seen carved roses; under another one could read these letters: CVM. SPECVLATOR. . . ."[26] There is no contemporary evidence as to why St. Peter's colonnades were made piecemeal, or what contemporaries thought of the effect. The miscellany of *spolia* may have been desired, or it may have been the unwanted product of necessity, i.e., eighty-eight matching shafts and their accoutrements could not be found, and one made do with whatever the depots could provide. Similarly, the response to the assemblage could have been indifferent or appreciative, resigned acknowledgment of how far Rome had fallen or celebration of the sudden ability of Christians to command the products of all the quarries of the ancient empire for their own use. Or, of course, both. One of the reasons why I find *spolia* so fascinating is this fundamental ambiguity, the simultaneous possibilities of understanding them in terms of their original purpose and context and in terms of the context and purpose of their reuse.

Influence

Generally speaking, where there is marble in the Middle Ages there are *spolia*. The Roman quarries in the region of Carrara were abandoned in late antiquity and were not reopened until the twelfth century.[27] From the fourth through the sixth centuries newly quarried columns and capitals arrived on the east coast of Italy from Byzantium; some spectacular examples of these imports survive in the churches at Ravenna, San Vitale (Fig. 9) and Sant'Apollinare in Classe. Then the imports stopped coming. In some regions—especially in northern Europe, where marble had never been plentiful—architectural ornament disappeared or was executed in the same local materials as the building; hence the eventual emergence of the brilliant schools of architectural sculpture in limestone that we call Romanesque. In Italy, however, marble continued to

[25] Arbeiter, *Alt-St. Peter*, 122, 128–29.

[26] Giacomo Grimaldi, *Descrizione della Basilica antica di S. Pietro in Vaticano. Codice Barberiniano latino 2733*, ed. Reto Niggl (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1972; Codices e vaticanis selecti, 32), 242.

[27] Marco Franzini, "I marmi da La Spezia a Pisa," in Enrico Castelnuovo, ed., *Niveo de marmore. L'uso artistico del marmo di Carrara dall'XI al XV secolo* (Genoa: Edizioni Colombo, 1992), 36–42; Pietro Giorgieri, *Carrara* (Bari: Edizioni Laterza, 1992), 33–34.

be a sine qua non of architectural pretension. It had to be recovered from Roman sources. Analysis of the stone used by the twelfth-century sculptor of Modena cathedral, Wiligelmus, for the reliefs that were later set into the cathedral facade, has shown that he worked with a motley collection of slabs, including many of Greek marble that must have been imported at the beginning of the first millennium.[28]

The example of Wiligelmus makes the important point that ancient stones were, first and foremost, material. They were valued for their material properties, including brilliance and color, and appreciated for their high cost.[29] This was so whether the stone was carved into new shapes by contemporary craftsmen or displayed in the state in which it was found, like the Roman bench supports reused to make the arms of an episcopal throne in S. Maria in Cosmedin (Fig. 7), or the column shafts and capitals of a spoliate colonnade. In many cases it is probably anachronistic to privilege the quality of antiquity over the value of the material, even if antiquity is inescapable. A column shaft of Lucullean marble was timeless in its value, like a diamond; nevertheless antiquity was entailed in it because there was no modern production of the stone.

The use of architectural *spolia* tended to accompany the retention of the wooden-roofed early Christian basilica as an architectural design. This was conspicuously the case in Rome, where throughout the Middle Ages churches continued to repeat, in reduced form, the model of the Lateran cathedral and St. Peter's (Fig. 1). But it also occurred in South Italy and Sicily, and north as far as Tuscany. Marvin Trachtenberg has recently characterized these buildings as "historicist," in opposition to the "modernist" Gothic buildings of northern Europe.[30] I think it may exaggerate the purposefulness of their builders to call them historicist. A truly historicist building would be a "strong" one in tense conversation with its historical sources; and these traditional basilicas—however wonderful for other reasons—are not strong in that way. In Bloom's terms, the millennial repetition of the architectural idea of the basilica, like the reuse of *spolia*, "just happened." Paradoxically, these buildings, which, according to the loose conception of "influence" demonstrated at the beginning of this article, should show Roman influence most strongly, on the "anxious" model show no influence at all.

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[28] Mario Bertolani, "Note sulla natura delle pietre usate nel duomo di Modena," in *Lanfranco e Wiligelmo. Il Duomo di Modena* (Modena: Coptip Industrie Grafiche, 1984), 298–305; Elfriede Regina Knauer, "Tribuerunt Sua Marmora Provinciae. Beobachtungen zu antiken Vorbildern von Wiligelmus' Genesis-Fries an der Domfassade in Modena und zu den sog. Metopen," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 50 (1987): 154.

[29] Weigel, "Spolien," 122–27.

[30] Marvin Trachtenberg, "Gothic/Italian 'Gothic': Toward a Redefinition," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 50 (1991): 22–37.

Strong Buildings?

As an example of a building that might show influence in Harold Bloom's sense I propose the chapel built by Charlemagne in Aachen. Completed in 790, it has a domed central space delimited by eight piers, which are connected by two stories of arches (Fig. 8). A continuous horizontal cornice over the lower arcade marks the floor of an enveloping gallery that looks into the center through stacked pairs of Corinthian columns. Charlemagne's throne sits on a platform in the western bay of the gallery, one story above the viewpoint in Figure 8. Disproportionately steep from ground level, the central space looks normal from the raised perspective of the throne, in which the lower story almost disappears and only the upper arches with their two registers of columns are clearly visible.

The columns were proclaimed *spolia* by Charlemagne's advisor Einhard, who wrote that Charles "was unable to find marble columns for his construction anywhere else, and so he had them brought from Rome and Ravenna."[31] In fact, a number of the capitals have proven to be Carolingian simulations of *spolia*, and the authentic *spolia* did not necessarily come from Rome.[32] It is usually assumed that the claim to have acquired *spolia* from the old imperial capital cities was made for programmatic reasons, to express Charlemagne's own pretensions to imperial status and grandeur; thus the palatine chapel figures in most discussions of *spolia* as a paradigm of influence in the normal sense employed by R. R. Bolgar: the "transmission of ideas."[33]

The referential effect of the chapel at Aachen—its iconography, to use the term coined for this signifying capacity by Richard Krautheimer—involves more than its *spolia*.[34] Its overall configuration recalls the early Byzantine church of San Vitale at Ravenna, constructed in the reign of Justinian and Theodora (d. 548) and famously adorned with their portraits. San Vitale also has a domed central space on eight piers that opens into

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[31] Lewis Thorpe, trans., *Einhard and Notker the Stammerer. Two Lives of Charlemagne* (Harmondsworth and Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969), 79.

[32] Felix Kreusch, "Im Louvre wiedergefundene Kapitelle und Bronzebasen aus der Pfalzkirche Karls des Großen zu Aachen," *Cahiers archéologiques* 18 (1968): 71–77; idem, "Zwei im Louvre wiedergefundene Kapitelle aus Karls des Großen Pfalzkirche zu Aachen," *Bonner Jahrbücher* 171 (1971): 407–15; Christoph Stiegemann and Matthias Wemhoff, eds., *799. Kunst und Kultur der Karolingerzeit. Karl der Große und Papst Leo. III in Paderborn. Katalog der Ausstellung*, 1 (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1999), II.69 (pp. 110–11).

[33] Werner Jacobsen, "Spolien in der karolingischen Architektur," in Poeschke, ed., *Antike Spolien*, 155–68.

[34] Richard Krautheimer, "Introduction to an 'Iconography of Medieval Architecture'" [1942], reprinted in idem, *Studies in Early Christian, Medieval, and Renaissance Art* (New York: New York University Press, 1969), 115–50.

two levels of ambulatories through paired columns (Fig. 9). There is no lower story, however, and the columns are disposed on receding semicircular paths between the piers. There are no straight lines like the heavy horizontal cornice or the vertical planes suggested by the rectilinear alignment of the columns at Aachen (Fig. 8). Although the elements are the same and the designs are unmistakably related, the effects of these interior spaces are almost opposing: balanced proportions and serene expansiveness in San Vitale, dominant verticality and stark prismatic constraint at Aachen.[35]

It is unclear whether the palatine chapel was meant to reprise San Vitale specifically, or whether their resemblance denotes a more generic affiliation with a tradition of centralized buildings associated with emperors and kings.[36] Even in the latter case San Vitale remains a conspicuous point of reference, an indubitable source for the Carolingian chapel, as the formal resemblance between them is much closer than one normally finds among medieval buildings. But the *spolia* are a difference, signaling an area of resistance. The column shafts and capitals in San Vitale were newly made for the sixth-century construction, and the capitals, in particular, are distinctively post-Roman, comprising early Byzantine shapes (impost capitals, folded capitals) and decorative motifs (Sasanian palmettes, vine scrolls, interlace) that are flagrantly un-Vitruvian.[37] Vitruvius probably was unknown to the architect of San Vitale, but Charlemagne's advisors knew his treatise well. Einhard puzzled over its "obscure words and names."[38] Students of Vitruvius would have appreciated the conceit of bringing *spolia* especially from Rome. They might also have applauded the designer of the chapel for rejecting the qualities that modern architectural historians find Byzantine in San Vitale, notably its curvaceous grace and the hanging effect achieved by dissembling weight and gravity, in order to foster qualities that we consider Roman: solid, static masses, unnecessary height, traditional ornament.[39]

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[35] Günter Bandmann, "Die Vorbilder der Aachener Pfalzkapelle," in Wolfgang Braunfels, ed., *Karl der Große. Lebenswerk und Nachleben*, 3 (Düsseldorf: Verlag L. Schwann, 1965), 442, claimed that verticality was an "immanent" characteristic of Western, as opposed to Byzantine, architecture.

[36] Bandmann, "Vorbilder," 431–50.

[37] Friedrich Wilhelm Deichmann, *Frühchristliche Bauten und Mosaiken von Ravenna* (Baden-Baden: Bruno Grimm Verlag, 1958), pls. 293–307. Not all of the capitals are novelties; there are composite capitals with spiky acanthus leaves in the narthex and gallery.

[38] Karl-August Wirth, "Bemerkungen zum Nachleben Vitruvs im 9. und 10. Jahrhundert und zu dem Schlettstädter Vitruv-codex," *Kunstchronik* 20 (1967): 282; *799. Kunst und Kultur*, II.40 (pp. 78–79).

[39] Richard Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, 4th ed. with Slobodan Ćurčić (New York: Viking Penguin, 1986), 205–36. "Hanging" comes from Procopius' description of Hagia Sophia, which was contemporary with San Vitale: "Yet it seems not to rest upon solid masonry, but to cover the space with its golden dome suspended from heaven" (H. P. Dewing trans., Procopius, *Buildings*, 1.1.46 [p. 21]).

The *spolia* are indices of the builder's intensely retrospective aspiration, in Bloom's terms, an anxious avoidance of the more immediate traditions of effeminate Byzantine and uncouth Frank.

As a second example, I suggest an exactly contemporary building from a contiguous culture: the mosque at Córdoba begun under the Caliph ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ca. 785. The mosque is a hypostyle hall, a building type defined by the parallel rows of equidistant supports for the ceiling. The Umayyads brought the design with them when they fled from Syria to Spain. As built by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, the hall had eleven aisles separated by ten rows of eleven columns each: one hundred and ten columns, all *spolia* from Roman or Visigothic buildings. The columns are of several local marbles, ranging from dark breccia to the predominant light pink, and they are small: about 3 m tall, less than one-third the height of the shafts in the Lateran cathedral.[40] In order to extend their height to a level suitable for a ceiling, the architect added a second order of supports. The principle would have been recognized by Vitruvius, but the Córdoban version of it is unique (Figs. 10–12). The second vertical is a masonry pier more than twice as wide as the diameters of the little columns (1.01 versus a maximum of .43 m); above the piers, arches and a wall grow even thicker. The incremental broadening of the walls above the colonnades permitted another novel feature: gutters cut into the tops of the walls to drain the eleven parallel pitched roofs over the aisles (Fig. 12).[41]

The assemblages at Córdoba are pure bricolage. Willy-nilly, the colonnades invert the classical anticipation that lower orders will be sturdier, and upper ones progressively more delicate. Unawares—because the builder almost certainly had never seen it—the mosque at Córdoba turns the Basilica Ulpia upside-down (Fig. 4). The stacked supports carry two rows of arches: more-than-half-round, "horseshoe-shaped" arches on the columns, and semicircular arches on the piers (Figs. 10 and 12). A designer extrapolating from the Roman tradition might have interposed a low wall above the first arcade to serve as a level podium for the upper one, as at San Vitale (Fig. 9). Instead, the piers rise directly from the columns and the elevation consists entirely of verticals

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[40] K.A.C. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture*, vol. 2, *Early ʿAbbāsids, Umayyads of Cordova, Aghlabids, Ṭūlūnids, and Samānids, A.D. 751–905* (Oxford, 1932; rept. New York: Hacker Art Books, 1979), 148; Christian Ewert and Jens-Peter Wisshak, *Forschungen zur almohadischen Moschee. Lieferung 1: Vorstufen* (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1981): 57–58.

[41] Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture*, 148–49; Christian Ewert, *Spanisch-islamische Systeme sich kreuzender Bögen*, vol. 1, *Die senkrechten ebenen Systeme sich kreuzender Bögen als Stützkonstruktionen der vier Rippenkuppeln in der ehemaligen Hauptmoschee von Córdoba* (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter & Co., 1968), 12–13.

and their linking arcades. Inspiration for this distinctive effect has been traced to Roman aqueducts, in particular the ruin called "los Milagros" at Mérida, on which the water channels run on three rows of arches connecting the pylons.[42] This is something the mosque's architect might have seen, although Mérida is 254 km northwest of Córdoba on modern roads. Granted an echo of los Milagros at Córdoba, we have influence in the traditional sense, but the execution of the idea with *spolia* makes a difference. The column compromises the functionality of the pier, and the pier makes the column look inadequate (Figs. 10 and 11). The effect is ambiguous, as if the designer were anxiously disparaging the columns he had been compelled—whether by aesthetic or programmatic motivation—to salvage from ruined buildings and reuse.

Anxiety, I repeat, is an anachronistic concept that serves only to provoke fresh observation of medieval buildings that, under the lens of "influence" as it is normally applied, seem all the same. All spoliate buildings perforce show the influence of Rome, but not all actively engage the Roman heritage. Those that do evidence a spectrum of reception ranging from the aggressive embrace of Charlemagne's chapel to the discomfiture of the Great Mosque of Córdoba and beyond. Against the great tide of Roman influence some medieval buildings were harbors and some were moles.

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[42] Ewert, *Spanisch-islamische Systeme*, 58–59.



FIGURE 1. Rome, Santa Maria in Trastevere, nave, 1139–43 (photo: Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo e la Documentazione, Rome, Neg. D 1822).

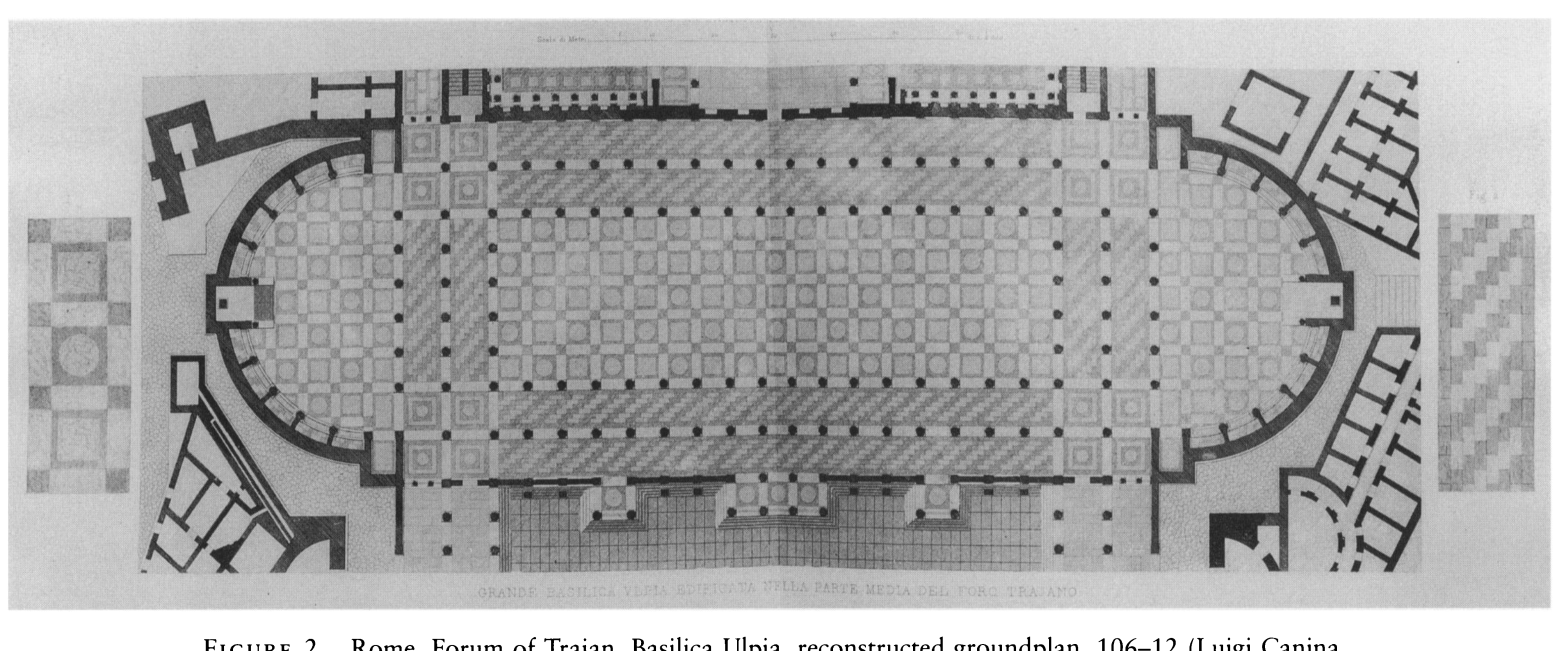


Figure 2. Rome, Forum of Trajan, Basilica Ulpia, reconstructed groundplan, 106–12 (Luigi Canina, *Gli Edifizij di Roma antica cogniti per alcune reliquie*, 2 [Rome: Canina, 1848], pl. 112).

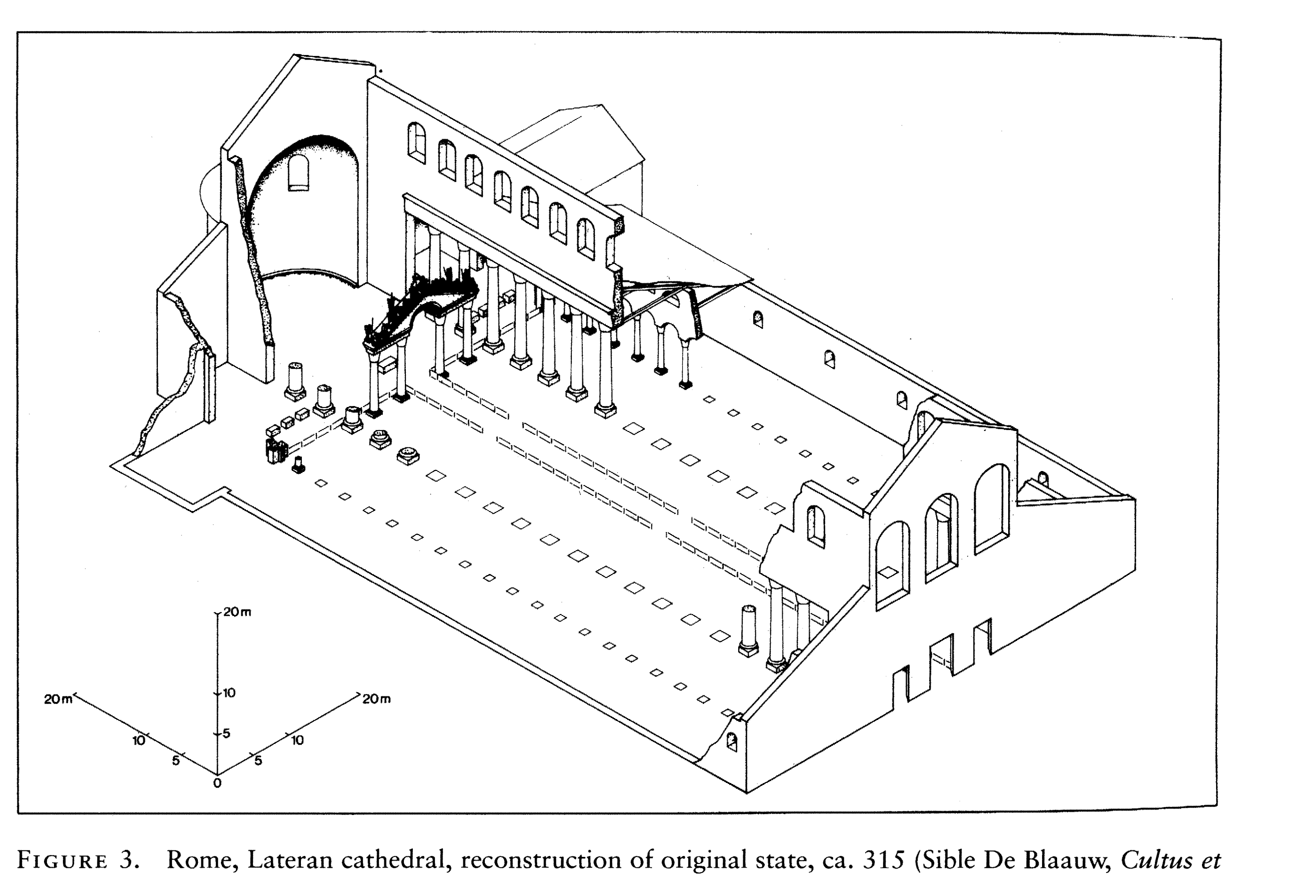


FIGURE 3. Rome, Lateran cathedral, reconstruction of original state, ca. 315 (Sible De Blaauw, *Cultus et decor. Liturgia e architettura nella Roma tardoantica e medievale*, 2 [Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1994; Studi e testi, 356], fig. 2).

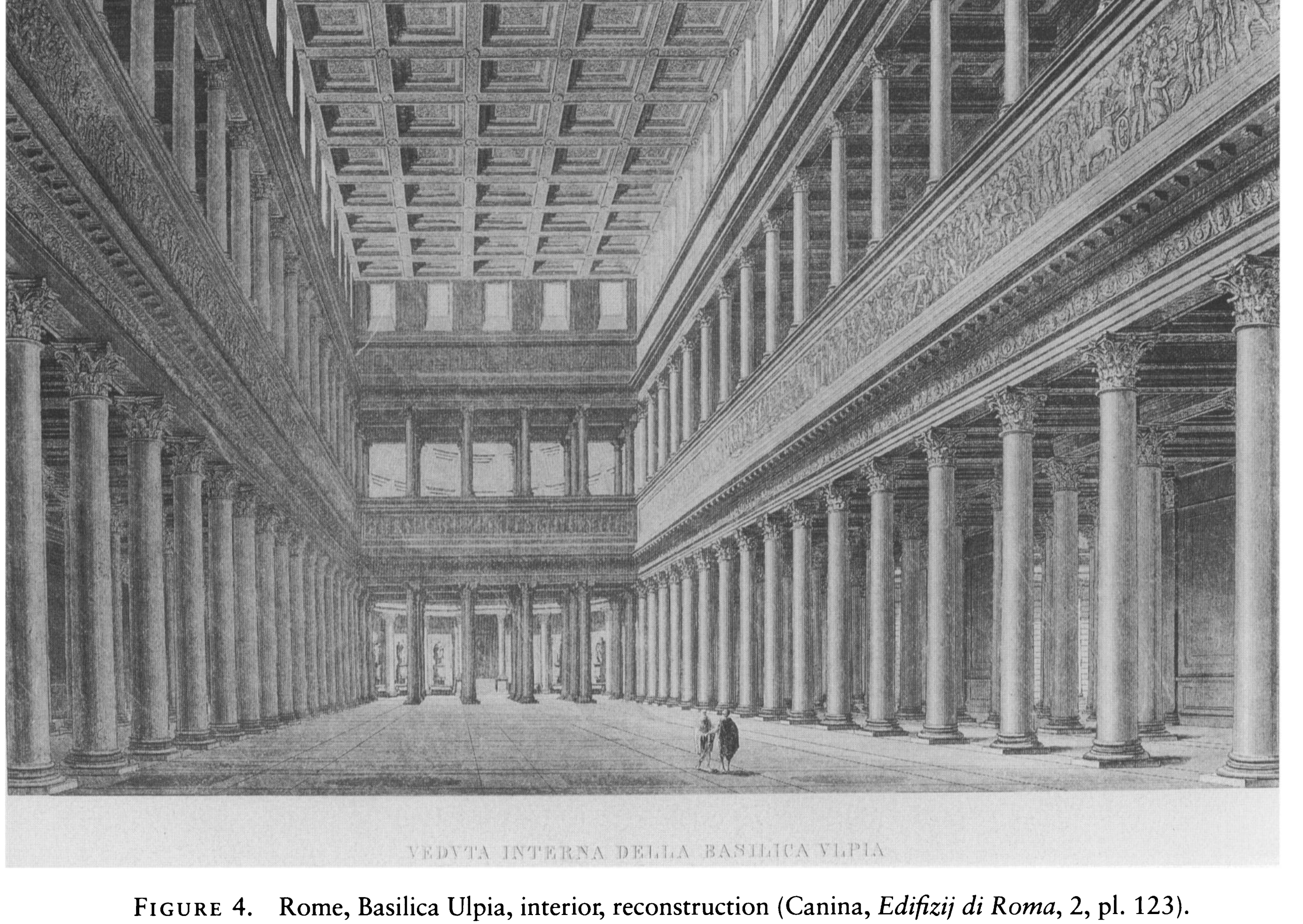


FIGURE 4. Rome, Basilica Ulpia, interior, reconstruction (Canina, *Edifizij di Roma*, 2, pl. 123).

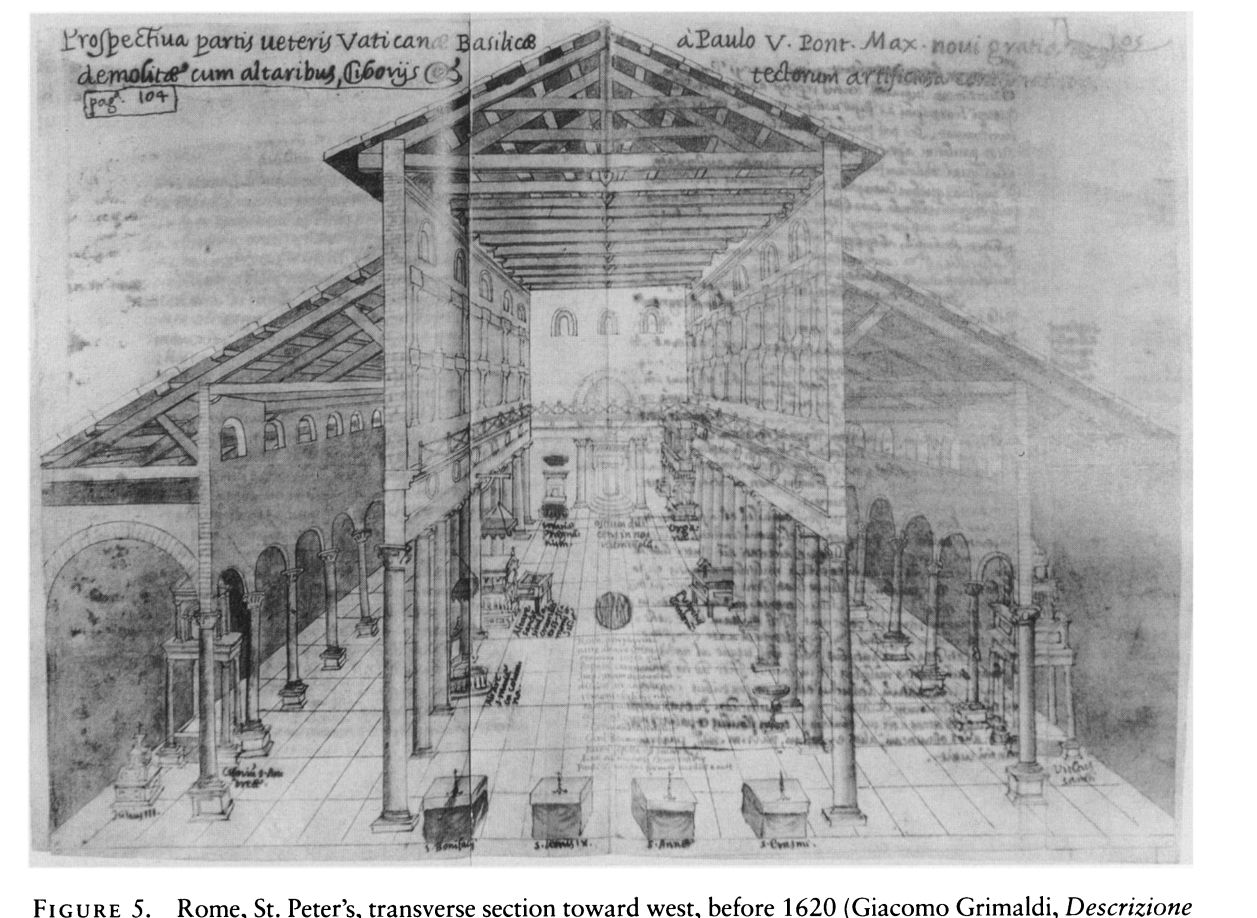


FIGURE 5. Rome, St. Peter's, transverse section toward west, before 1620 (Giacomo Grimaldi, *Descrizione della Basilica antica di S. Pietro in Vaticano*, ed. Reto Niggl, 138–39).

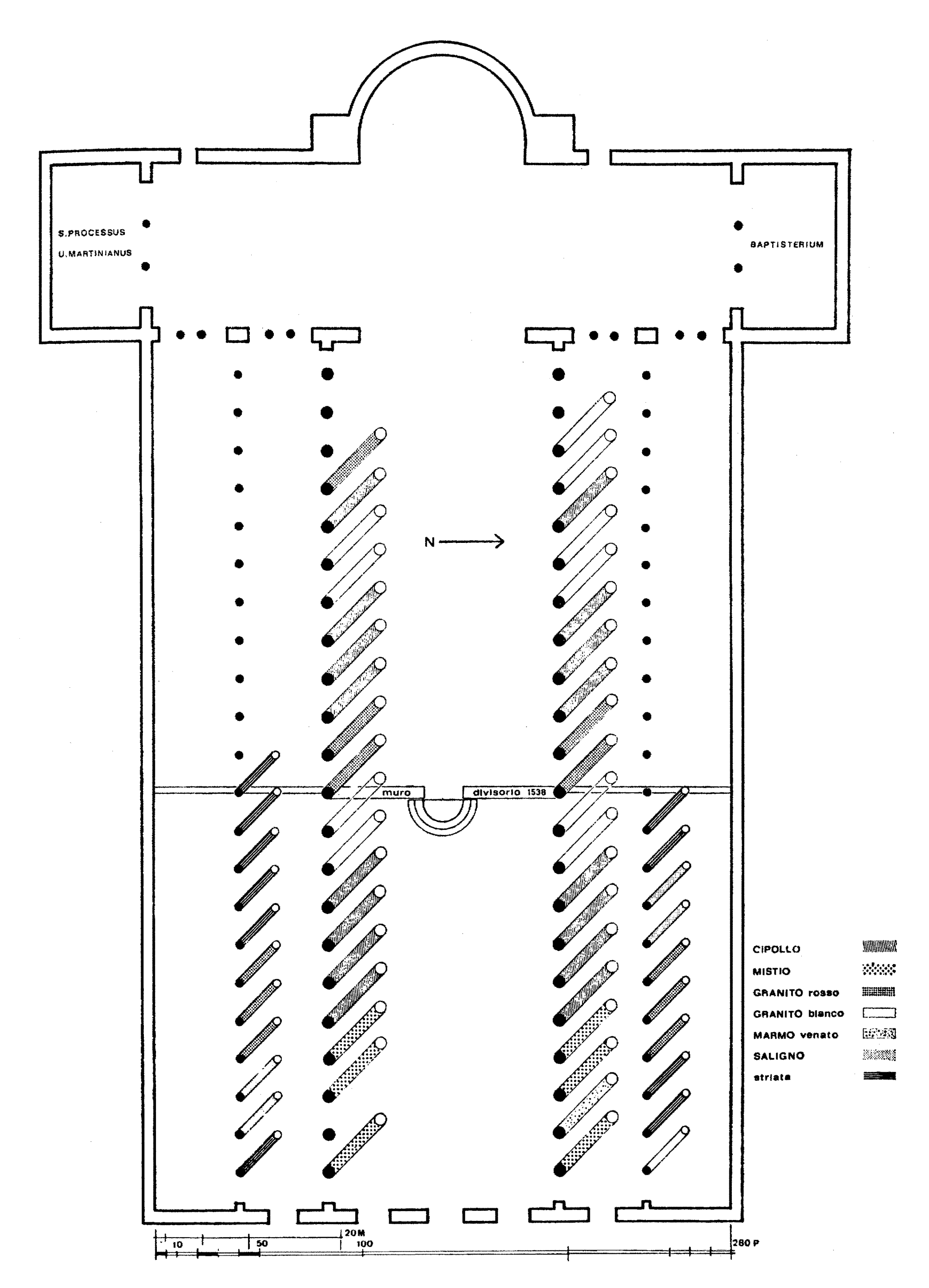


FIGURE 6. Rome, St. Peter's, groundplan showing materials of spoliate column shafts, ca. 325–50 (Jürgen Christern, "Der Aufriß von Alt-St.-Peter," *Römische Quartalschrift* 62 [1967]: 173, fig. 16).

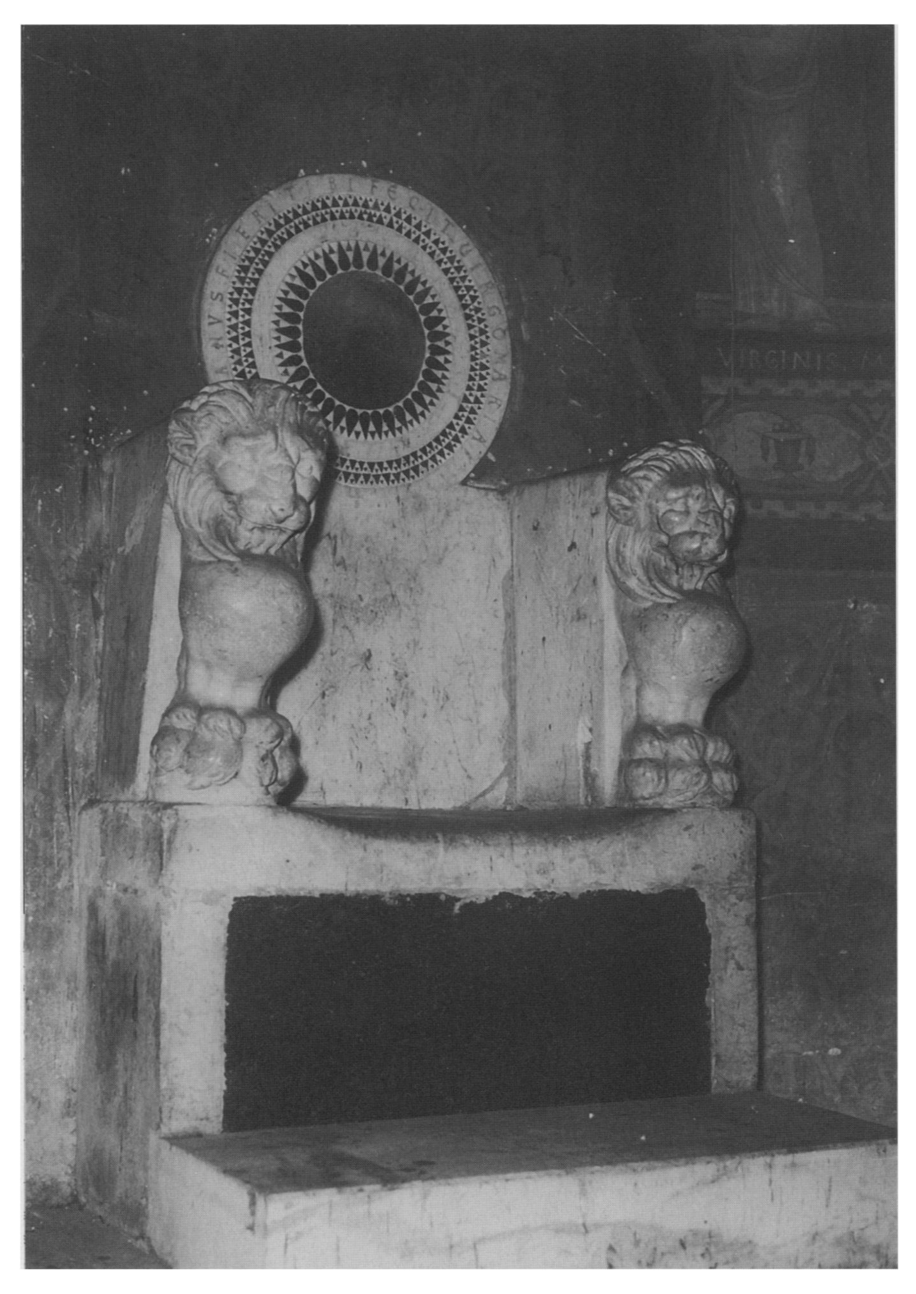


FIGURE 7. Rome, Santa Maria in Cosmedin, apsidal throne, ca. 1123 (photo: Bibliotheca Hertziana, Rome, Neg. U. PL. D33934).

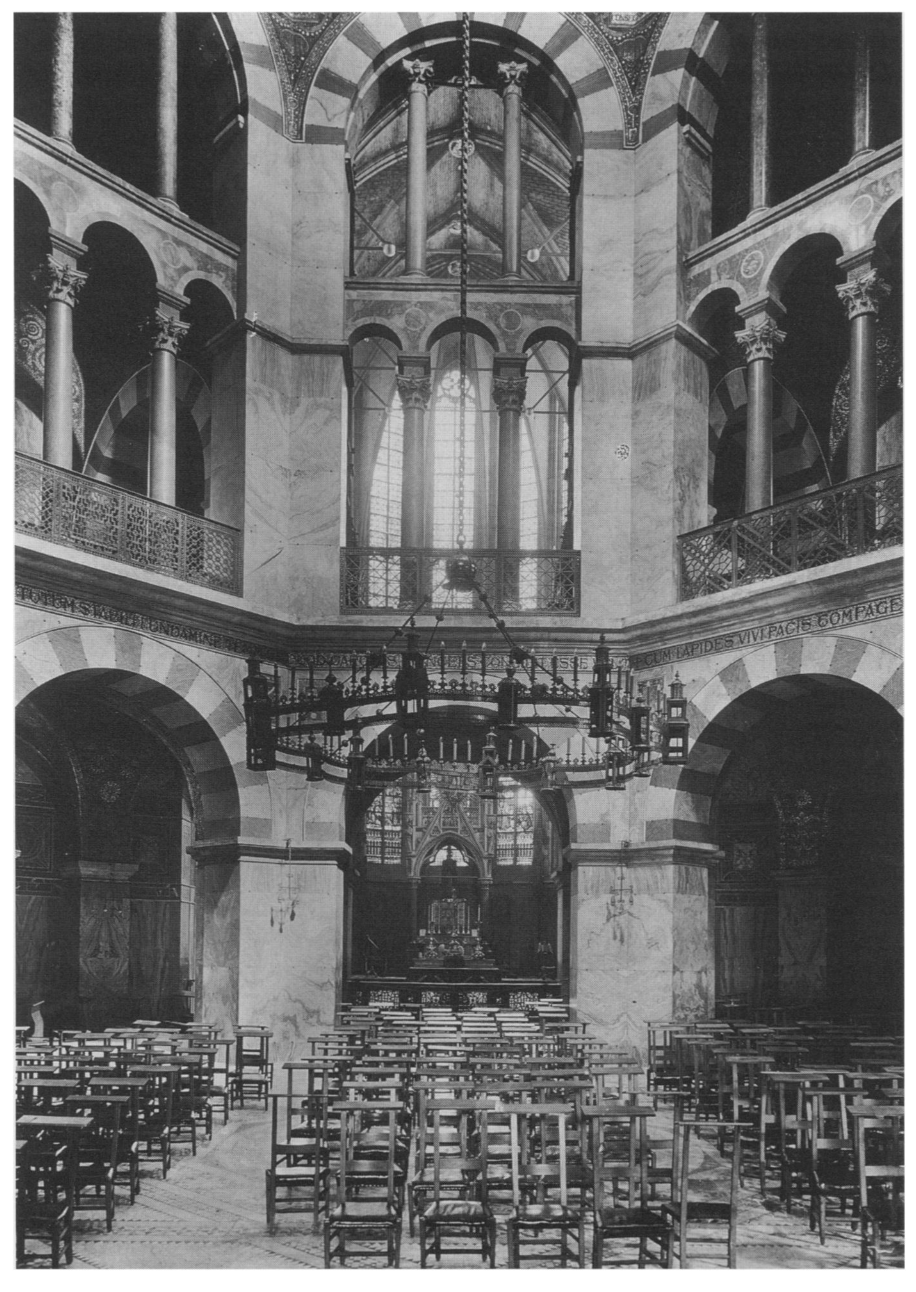


FIGURE 8. Aachen, palatine chapel of Charlemagne, interior, ca. 790 (photo: Bildarchiv Foto Marburg, No. 64.661).



FIGURE 9. Ravenna, San Vitale, interior, 532–47 (photo: Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Rome, Neg. 57.1867).



FIGURE 10. Córdoba, Great Mosque, hall of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān I, ca. 785, arcades (photo: author).

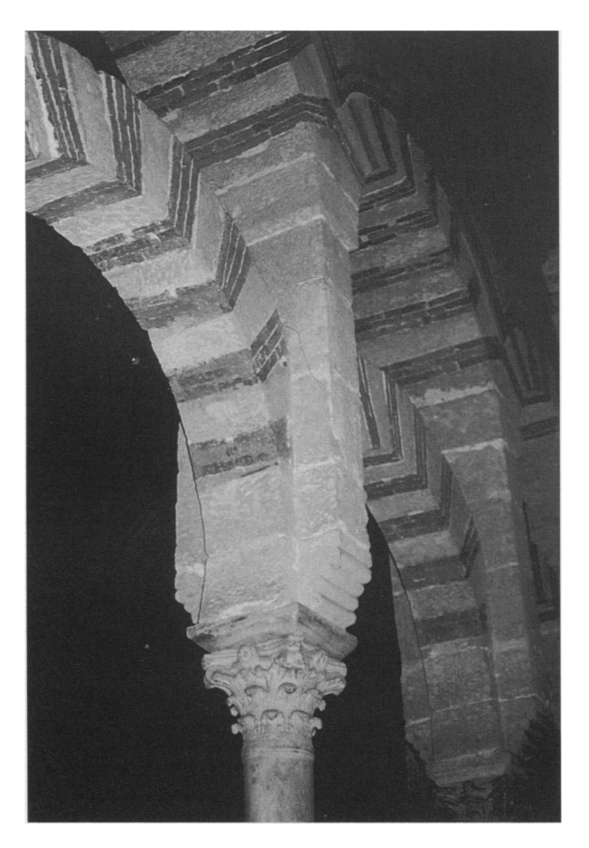


FIGURE 11. Córdoba, Great Mosque, hall of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān I, ca. 785, detail of arcade (photo: author).

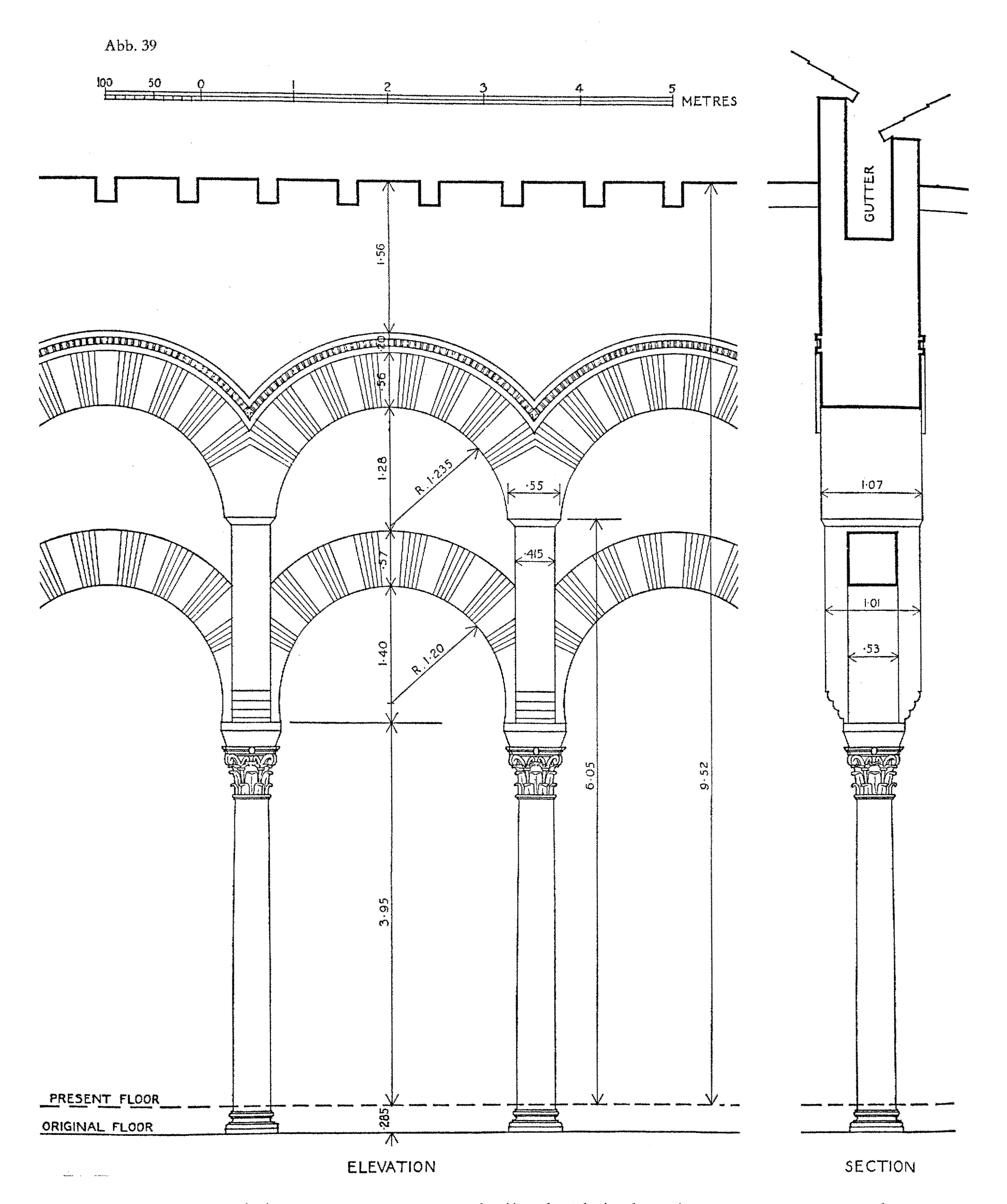


FIGURE 12. Córdoba, Great Mosque, hall of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān I, ca. 785, elevation and section of arcades (Ewert and Wisshak, *Forschungen zur almohadischen Moschee. Lieferung* 1: *Vorstufen*, fig. 39).